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ATISHI'S FAST ENTERS DAY FOUR, DOCTORS SAY HER HEALTH FAILING

The Delhi water minister is on indefinite fast protesting the decline in water supply to Delhi from the neighbouring BJP-ruled Haryana

WEIGHT, BLOOD PRESSURE DECREASING RAPIDLY

Atishi's weight and blood pressure are decreasing rapidly, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) said in a statement. "Doctors have described the speed at which her blood sugar level, blood pressure and weight have decreased as dangerous," the party said. Atishi, however, has refused to be admitted to a hospital, saying she will continue with her fast until Haryana releases water

DELHI CABINET MINISTERS WRITE TO MODI

- Delhi cabinet ministers on Monday wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to resolve the water crisis on priority
- Delhi's water requirement is 1,005 million gallons per day (MGD). About 613 MGD comes from Haryana. The ministers, in their letter, said there has been a 100 MGD drop in water coming from Haryana

2.2 kg

DROP IN ATISHI'S WEIGHT IN FOUR DAYS, CLAIMS AAM AADMI PARTY

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Videograb of Prime Minister Narendra Modi taking his oath as a member of the House during the first day of the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha, in Delhi on Monday | PTI

Drama, fireworks on Day I

PM, 279 others sworn in as members of 18th Lok Sabha; Modi, Kharge spar on Emergency

PREETHA NAIR @New Delhi

THE opening day of the special session of the 18th Lok Sabha witnessed dramatic scenes on Monday as opposition leaders, including Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, waved copies of the Constitution when Prime Minister Narendra Modi walked up to take his oath as a member of the House.

Apart from Modi, several Cabinet ministers, including Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, celebrities like Kangana Ranaut and 16 from NDA ally Telugu Desam Party (TDP) took their oaths. While 280 members were sworn in on Monday, the rest, including Rahul, will take their oath on Tuesday.

The country's linguistic diversity was on display as MPs took their oaths in Sanskrit, Hindi, Dogri, Bengali, Assamese, Gujarati and Odia, apart from English.

In his pre-session remarks, Modi took a swipe at the Congress over the Emergency, calling it a black spot on democracy when the Constitution was discarded. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge was equally pungent in his response, accusing Modi of imposing an undeclared Emergency in the country in the last 10 years.

The session began on a combative note with the boycott by three Opposition MPs from a panel to assist pro-tem speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab. The Opposition was up in arms against the government for ignoring eight-term Lok Sabha member Kodikunnil Suresh for that post. President Droupadi Murmu had appointed a panel comprising K Suresh, TMC's Sudip Bandopadhyay and DMK's T R Baalu along with two other BJP MPs to assist Mahtab. However, the three Opposition MPs refused to be a part of the panel on Monday morning.

Most of the Congress MPs held a copy of the Constitution while taking their oath. Rahul sat along with SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and Ayodhya MP Awadhesh Prasad in the front row on the Opposition side.

The BJP poked the Congress with party chief J P Nadda writing to Kharge, questioning the "stoic silence" of his party on the recent hooch tragedy in Tamil Nadu. The coming days of the session are likely to see a belligerent Opposition taking on the NDA government on several issues, including the NEET-NET exam paper leak row, three criminal laws, Manipur violence and the recent train accident.

Oppn against Birla, NDA call on LS Speaker today

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @New Delhi

THE Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is expected to announce its candidate for the Lok Sabha Speaker's post on Tuesday, hours before the nomination of candidates for the key post starts. According to highly placed sources, the NDA suggested the name of Om Birla, who was the Speaker in the previous Lok Sabha, as a consensus candidate for the Speaker's position but did not get support from the Opposition parties. Sources said Birla being the first choice is in line with the Narendra Modi-led government's theme of continuity in its third term.

While there is no official word yet from the NDA side on the consensus bid, BJP sources said three more names are being considered. "If everything goes as per plan and the Opposition doesn't oppose the continuation of Om Birla, the possibility of Birla's continuation is high. In case of disagreement, the BJP's East Champaran (Bihar) MP Radha Mohan Singh or the MP from Pali constituency (Rajasthan) P P Chaudhary might be announced as the NDA's candidate for LS Speaker," said a senior BJP source.

The name of Andhra BJP chief Daggubati Purandeswari is also doing the rounds.

Chaudhary is a senior lawyer also and chairperson of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Jan Vishwas Bill 2022. He had earlier served as MoS in the Ministry of Law and Justice in 2019 and MoS in the Ministry of Electronics and IT in 2017. He was also honoured with the Sansad Ratna award twice in 2015 and 2016.

Both Choudhary and Singh are experienced in Parliamentary affairs and enjoy rapport with the Opposition parties.

Purandeswari is the sister-in-law of TDP chief and Andhra Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. The Lok Sabha Speaker's election will take place on June 26.

Police hint at security lapse in NEET paper delivery in J'khand

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@New Delhi/Patna/Ranchi/Mumbai

EVEN as the CBI took over five new cases of alleged malpractices in NEET-UG in Bihar, Gujarat and Rajasthan, Bihar police on Monday said the question paper could have been leaked during its transportation in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh. Employees of Blue Dart in Hazaribagh told police that the boxes carrying question papers were transported to the SBI branch in the city using a hired e-rickshaw, in violation of protocol.

Flagging anomalies in NEET-UG held in Jharkhand, Hazaribagh NTA city coordinator and Oasis School principal Ehsan Ul Haque said the courier firm delivered the question paper on May 3, two days before the test. "The sensitive question paper was sent trusting a driver... the transport agency is under scanner for the paper leak," he said.

NSUI activists stage a protest at Jantar Mantar in Delhi on Monday | SHEKHAR YADAV

Meanwhile, the CBI took over five new cases that were being investigated by police in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Bihar on Monday, a day after it registered its own FIR in connection with the alleged irregularities in the exam.

In a separate development, the Anti-Terrorism Squad of Maharashtra police arrested a Zilla Parishad school teacher from Latur and registered a case against four persons for running a racket for those who can pay to crack NEET.

After taking over these new cases, the CBI will be probing a total of six cases pertaining to alleged irregularities in NEET-UG conducted on May 5, officials said. Barring the case from Bihar, the other four appear to be isolated incidents of impersonation and cheating by local officials, and candidates, they added.

Anganwadi workers stage a protest demanding that the state government start kindergarten classes in anganwadis, in Bengaluru on Monday | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

LKG, UKG classes in anganwadi centres soon, says Hebbalkar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

WOMEN and Child Welfare Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar on Monday said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has approved a proposal to start lower and upper kindergarten classes in anganwadi centres.

She told reporters here that anganwadi centres will be upgraded and children will be admitted to LKG and UKG classes. The CM has issued a directive to constitute a committee of experts to look into the proposal and suggest recommendations. The purpose of this initiative is to provide good food and quality education to children at the pre-primary level.

The minister said LKG and UKG classes will be started in anganwadi centres across the state, excluding Kalyan Karnataka. "Our aim is to provide quality education and nutritious food to children. They will also be given uniforms, books and bags through the Women and Child Welfare Department," she said.

The minister said transfer certificates (TCs) will be issued to LKG and UKG students like other government schools. In regular government schools, montessori classes will be started. There was opposition from anganwadi workers to this. "This is why we decided to upgrade the anganwadi centres, where along with Kannada, there is a proposal to teach English to children," she added.

"Of the total anganwadi teachers, over 9,000 are graduates and 1,500 are postgraduates. With these teachers, we will be able to provide quality education to children," Hebbalkar said.

PRICE SURGE

Centre imposes stockholding limits on wheat

JITENDRA CHOUBEY @New Delhi

THE Centre on Monday imposed a stock limit on wheat to reduce hoarding of the grain and stablise its prices.

The stock limit will apply to all wholesalers, retailers, big chain retailers and processors in all states and Union Territories until March 31, 2025.

The stock limit for traders or wholesalers is 3,000 metric tonnes (MT). For retailers, it is 10 MT for each of the outlets while for big chain retailers, it is 10 MT at each of their outlets and 3,000 MT at all their depots. For millers and processors, the stock limit is 70% of the monthly installed capacity multiplied by the remaining months of FY 2024-25.

"The government is open to all options if the stock limit would not cool down the price such as by reducing import duty and would soon think to dump wheat in the open market through open market sales scheme," said Sanjeev Chopra, secretary, Department of Food and Public Distribution in the consumer affairs ministry.

The minimum support price of wheat is ₹2,275, but the grain's price in the open market is hovering around ₹2,500.

Chopra dispelled worries about supplies. The stock limit comes amid claims of bumper production of the grain in the current Rabi Marketing Season. "I want to dispel the shortage of wheat in the country... we want prices of wheat to be stable," Chopra said. He added that the decision was taken to prevent market speculations and hoarding of the grain.

K'taka bans artificial colours in kebabs

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RESPONDING to widespread concern over health risks associated with consumption of artificially-coloured kebabs, the health department has banned use of such additives in vegetarian, chicken and fish kebabs sold across the state.

The decision comes in view of the findings that kebab samples collected from 39 outlets contained unsafe levels of artificial colours such as Sunset Yellow, a synthetic orange dye, and Carmoisine, a dark red colouring agent.

"Such additives, as per the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and The Food Safety and Standards (Food Products Standards and Food Additives) Regulations, 2011, pose serious health risks," the department's order issued on June 21 stated.

Laboratories reported that about eight kebab samples were found to be non-compliant with food safety standards due to the presence of artificial colours, the order said.

The order stated that penalties for violations, ranging from imprisonment for a minimum of seven years up to life term, along with fines up to Rs 10 lakh will be imposed.

PULLING IT OFF

India captain Rohit Sharma pulls for a six against Australia during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup match at Darren Sammy National Cricket Stadium in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia, on Monday. After scoring 205, India won by 24 runs. With this, India are through to the semi-finals and will play against England on June 27 | PTI | P13

EXPRESS READ

SC says Delhi HC stay on Kejri bail 'unusual'

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday termed as "unusual" the Delhi High Court's decision of reserving the order while granting interim stay on the trial court's order granting bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam | P9

'Hampi By Night' on hold over ₹70L power bill dues

Hosapete: The 'Hampi By Night' show at the Unesco-recognised heritage site has stopped for the last two months as authorities are yet to clear electricity bills of Rs 70 lakh. However, officials at a private company that operates the show said they have already cleared the payments | P6

ILLEGAL SAND MINING

M'luru's Pavoor Uliya island 'disappearing' slowly

DIVYA CUTINHO @Mangaluru

PAVOOR Uliya island on the outskirts of Mangaluru is slowly "disappearing" because of rampant illegal sand mining. Around 50 families are now living in fear there.

Under the slogan, "Save island, protect people's life", members of Catholic Sabha of Mangaluru and a delegation from like-minded organisations visited the island on Monday.

Fr Manohar D'souza, parish priest of Infant Jesus Church, said, "Those involved in illegal sand mining must be booked for murder. Our pleas to the district administration and departments concerned did not receive any positive response."

Gilbert D'souza, a resident of Pavoor Uliya, said people of the island recently chased away those extracting sand. But the sand mafia has been threatening them since then. "The 100-acre island has shrunk significantly because of illegal sand mining. When AB Ibrahim was deputy commissioner of Dakshina Kannada, illegal sand mining was stopped at Valachil, Pavoor, Gadigadde and behind Sahyadri College. The sand mafia is back now with hundreds of workers extracting and transporting sand from the island. We need a permanent solution to this problem," he said.

Pavoor Uliya island where illegal sand mining is rampant | EXPRESS

Reporters, who were taken to Pavoor Uliya, saw some workers extracting sand there. There were mounds of sand dumped along the banks of the island to be shipped elsewhere.

Activist Muneer Katipalla, who was part of the delegation, sought a permanent solution to illegal sand mining at Pavoor Uliya.

Goa murder: Second report says B'luru CEO 'mentally fit'

NAUSHAD BIJAPUR @Belagavi

NEARLY six months after **Suchana Seth**, CEO of a Bengaluru-based AI firm, allegedly killed her four-year-old son in a Goa hotel and a chargesheet filed against her two months ago, a second medical opinion has revealed that she is "mentally fit".

Besides, a forensic report has revealed that Seth wrote the note that was recovered from the suitcase in which she had stuffed her son's body and took it to Bengaluru when she was caught.

After Seth's father demanded that the Mental Health Authority re-evaluate Suchana's mental health, the children's court in Goa approved his plea in March. In February, her father submitted an application contesting the findings of the Institute of Psychiatry and Human Behaviour (IPHB) in Bambolim, which had determined that she was mentally stable.

Sources said the note on tissue paper was sent to Pune Central Forensic Science Laboratory. In it, Seth stated that her son was against her former husband Venkat Raman visiting him. "My kid pleaded with me not to hand him over to my abusive, violent former spouse. I'm being threatened with a jail sentence by my ex-husband and the family court judge if I don't send my 4-year-old kid against his will," she stated.